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SUBJECT THE MOST PRIMINENT THEMES AND SUB-THEMES
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S U M M A R Y

The following pages contain representative quotations illustrating the Soviet radio's most prominent themes and sub-themes as derived from an intensive study of monitored Soviet radio broadcasts during the month of April 1949. (Continuous study of subsequent monitored broadcasts has revealed few appreciable changes in the thematic pattern of Soviet radio propaganda.)

Keyed to the explicitly stated "two-camp" concept of current world politics--the "imperialist, warmongering" camp led by the ruling circles of the United States, and the "democratic, peace-loving" camp led by the Soviet Union--Soviet broadcasts concentrate on the alleged evils represented and fostered by the former and on the alleged good represented and fostered by the latter. To this end, the following broad themes are most prominently emphasized:

PEACE: Our opponents in the "imperialist, warmongering" camp stand for war; we in the "democratic, peace-loving" camp stand for peace. (Compared to monitored Soviet broadcasts of a year ago, there is a greatly increased emphasis on peace. A preliminary count indicates that approximately 32 percent of Moscow's total emphasis is now given to this theme, as compared with 16% a year ago.)

DEMOCRACY: Our opponents are reactionaries, monopolists, fascists; we are democratic, for the workers, for the people.

TRUTHFULNESS: Our opponents are lying; we are truthful.

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE: Our opponents are imperialists, want to rule the world; we stand for the equality and independence of all nations.

ECONOMIC WELFARE: Our opponents are declining economically; we are forging ahead.

Three additional broad themes--receiving less emphasis, however, than those listed above--are the following:

STRENGTH: The forces of peace and democracy are worldwide, and are growing in strength.

CULTURE: The West is decadent; we are culturally progressive.

NATIONAL UNITY: Western policy aims at German dismemberment; we stand for a united, free Germany.

In addition to identifying the major themes around which the content of Soviet radio propaganda constellates, it should be noted that Soviet broadcasts are also characterized by a pattern of omissions and evasions:

(a) The control of atomic energy: Apart from its brief campaign to "ban the bomb," the Soviet radio has treated this topic only rarely, and always in such a way as to distract attention from the obstructive role played by the USSR.

(b) Soviet military strength: Attention is rarely given to specific elements of Soviet military power. The superiority of the USSR in land forces, for example, is almost never mentioned.

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(c) Communism and revolution: Soviet radio propaganda for foreign audiences gives little stress to such ideological terms as Communism and revolution. There is little to remind listeners of the violent and revolutionary character of both Communist history and basic Communist doctrine.

(d) Individual freedom: Western charges that the USSR is a police state are, as a rule, simply ignored. In fact, the whole issue of individual freedom is ordinarily ignored or evasively treated (e.g., by counter-charges of "slavery" in the West). "Democracy" is stressed, but the term is used as if it were primarily synonymous with economic justice and non-discrimination against social and economic groups; with only faint connotations of individual freedom.

(e) Facts: Although the Soviet radio preserves an imposing facade of fact-mindedness, many of the essential conclusions of Soviet propaganda rest upon assumptions that are themselves only rarely supported by facts. For example, the assertion of U.S. aggression rests primarily on such asserted evidence as the Atlantic Pact and the existence of U.S. military bases, plus the unsupported assumption that--"as the whole world knows"--the USSR could never make war; a military alliance against an obviously peace-loving nation could therefore have only one purpose--aggression.

A. BROAD THEMES AND SUB-THEMES*

I. P E A C E

BROAD

THEMES The ruling circles in Britain and America are warmongers, aggressors:

"The war instigators,** those modern pretenders to world domination, try to involve the whole world in the execution of their aggressive plans." (14 April 1949)

"The editors of the ARBEIDERBLADET can hardly be unaware of these American calculations. They certainly realize that the U.S. intends to use Norway as a spring-board in its aggression against the Soviet Union." (14 April 1949)

The Soviet Union is peaceful, cooperative; it makes peace proposals:

"That movement (for peace) has a mighty bulwark in the Soviet Union, the standard-bearer and hope of all progressive mankind in the struggle for peace." (14 April 1949)

SUB-

THEMES The Atlantic Pact is aggressive:

"The threat to peace and security by the creation of the bloc of the aggressors and those who are out for world domination is becoming more and more evident." (14 April 1949)

"We see these same circles snarling viciously at every step the people take in support of peace, at every protest that they make against the conclusion of the aggressive North Atlantic Pact." (14 April 1949)

"This (military) activity of the Western Powers is closely connected with their policy of building various political and military blocs directed against the USSR.

* No statistics are presented since relative frequencies have not yet been reliably established. The themes illustrated here, however, are those found to have been most often expressed in an actual count of a sample of April 1949 broadcasts. Each of the most prominent themes is illustrated by two or three quotations; the less prominent, by only one.

** The underlined words and phrases are those most directly representing the theme being illustrated. Most of these quotations represent more than one theme; this one, for example, refers to "world domination" as well as to war-making.

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There is a world-wide peace movement:

"On April 20, the World Congress of the Partisans of Peace opens in Paris. This is an event of great political importance. The number of the champions of peace is countless. In Indonesia, and in France, Italy, and the U.S., in Ottawa and in London, millions of common people stand on guard over peace." (14 April 1949)

"They (the warmongers) are on the defense too. Not against any external enemy, for, of course, no such enemy exists, but against the growing peace movements of the peoples of their own countries." (14 April 1949)

"A Congress of Intellectuals in New York made Clark and men like him fret and fume. They themselves thereby issued the certificate confirming the importance of the Congress in the struggle for peace." (14 April 1949)

The West is arming: it is militaristic:

"The formation of the North Atlantic bloc is taking place to the music of repeated appeals to arm." (14 April 1949)

"Why do the Americans feverishly erect military bases in the Near East and in Greenland, in Japan and in the Philippines?" (1 April 1949)

The West opposes the U.N.:

"As planned by its sponsors, the North Atlantic aggressive bloc is called upon to replace and annul the U.N., which has become an obstacle standing in their way." (14 April 1949)

The West violates international agreements:

"Anglo-American propaganda is trying to force the people of the world to forget the historic Potsdam Agreement, which provided for a really peaceful lasting settlement in Europe." (2 April 1949)

The West engages in espionage, conspiracy:

"Budapest, April 2--In a correspondence entitled 'The U.S. Intelligence Service Creates New Underground Organizations in Eastern Europe,' VILAG writes: 'The failures of U.S. secret service agents in Eastern Europe have compelled the central organs of the U.S. spying system to organize to check on the efficiency of the work in these countries.'" (2 April 1949)

The West is rebuilding German (or Japanese) war-potential:

"REUTERS reports that the Governments of the U.S., Great Britain and France have agreed already to refuse to dismantle the establishments of military importance in Western Germany." (2 April 1949)

II. DEMOCRACYBROAD
THEMES

Our opponents are reactionaries, monopolists, against "the workers" and "the people": they are the "ruling circles" in the West:*

"The group of monopoly capitalists, the true rulers of the United States, lives on Wall Street. This tiny group of superbillionaires dictate to their agents in the Government and the Congress the aggressive foreign and the reactionary internal policies." (13 April 1949)

* This theme appears chiefly in the choice of words used to designate the enemy rather than in the form of explicit argument.

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Our opponents are reactionaries, monopolists, against "the workers" and "the people": they are the "ruling circles" in the West: (Contd.)

"The reconversion (of Italian industry to war production), it is reported, will be accompanied by mass dismissals operated first to break the workers' opposition to the plan of the Italian warmongers, and then to carry out the broad offensive of Italian monopolies against the workers' rights." (14 April 1949)

"The Minister of the Interior described the (Paris) Congress as Communist-inspired. The trick is not new. The same thing happened in the United States when its governing circles described as Communist the U.S. Intellectuals' Peace Congress held in New York recently." (13 April 1949)

We are the democratic camp, "the people":

"The workers of Germany are resolved in favor of the Constitution drafted by the German People's Council, which is an important step towards the formation of a new German Democratic State." (13 April 1949)

"The WFTU is the mainstay of this unity (of labor). It mobilizes the forces of the working class to fight for better living conditions all over the world, to defend democracy and combat a resurgence of fascism and the danger of a new war." (13 April 1949)

SUB-

THEMES The reactionaries are persecuting representatives of the people:

"Reprisals and terrorism against the democratic forces have been widely used... (in Puerto Rico), with direct support from the Americans." (11 April 1949)

They support fascists:

"The Iberian Bloc had as its aim the creating of a basis for helping Hitlerite Germany and for strengthening the two fascist dictators, Salazar and Franco. Now the members of this bloc have gone over completely to the new pretenders to world domination, the Anglo-American warmongers." (31 March 1949)

They exploit the people, oppose labor's rights:

"But these people (in the New York slums) are not the poorest; they can pay 15 to 20 cents and sleep under a roof. There are many people in New York who have not got even this miserable sum of money to pay for a bed. They have nothing but benches in the parks to sleep on." (13 April 1949)

III. TRUTHFULNESS

BROAD

THEMES Our enemies are lying, concealing their true aims; they have been "unmasked":*

"For this purpose all means have been put into action--the press, the radio, the cinema. A wide stream of lies and slander has been let flow over all three..., the production of which has long since exceeded the prewar level, thanks to the efforts of the instigators of war." (14 April 1949)

"Their intention was to cast Hungary into the net of the Marshall Plan, and therefore they alleged that without American help not even half of the plan could be accomplished." (14 April 1949)

* Truthfulness is not often a stated goal (like peace and democracy); it is, rather, an assumed moral standard which (as in the above instance) is woven into a great variety of other contexts.

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SUB-

THEMES They pretend that they want peace:

"The lies and deceit are destined in the first place for internal consumption by their own people. For this purpose the instigators of war never tire of asserting their own love for peace. For this purpose they are ready to prove that the many billions worth of budgets of the U.S. are allegedly meant to extend the network of American schools or that the military bases in Iran have been erected for the defense of California, that the system of military blocs and pacts is a natural expression of a boundless love for unity and friendship--though the unity of these pacts is but a fist of fingers clenched together." (14 April 1949)

They slander the Soviet Union and Peoples' Democracies:

"The Voice of America, hoarse with slander, and the corrupt pens are never tired of screaming about the plans of aggression they themselves have invented."

Social Democrats and reactionary labor leaders only pretend to be for the workers; actually they are for monopoly capital:

"By joining with the AFL, that mortal enemy of working class unity, against the WFTU, the Trade Union Council leaders are playing into the hands of American monopoly capital." (13 April 1949)

IV. NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

BROAD

THEMES Our opponents are imperialists, expansionists; they want to rule the world:

"Yesterday we were struggling gallantly against the German fascists and Japanese imperialists who had taken the lead of the warmongers and enslavers of peoples. Now that they have been destroyed we are fighting just as courageously against the Anglo-U.S. imperialists who have taken up their post." (11 April 1949)

"Another step towards the subordination of Western Germany to American monopolies is the Occupation Statute." (13 April 1949)

"The masters of Wall Street and of the whole of America have in the postwar conditions adopted an openly expansionist course with the aim of establishing their rule in the world. Dreaming of world supremacy, the masters of Wall Street are knocking together all sorts of aggressive anti-Soviet blocs and pacts." (13 April 1949)

We respect the independence of other nations:

"In the Soviet zone the German economy was being reestablished without enslaving credits." (13 April 1949)

SUB-

THEMES Colonial imperialism:

"The American Government has no intention of withdrawing its troops from South Korea; it wants a firm foothold there for colonial exploitation and for the establishment of a military strategic base." (14 April 1949)

V. ECONOMIC WELFARE

BROAD

THEMES The USSR and the New Democracies are forging ahead economically:

"In the struggle for raising abundant crops tens of thousands of collective farmers have distinguished themselves." (15 April 1949)

"Dear J.V.: Thanks to the wise policy of the Party and Government, the Kuznetsk Coal Basin has been converted in the course of the Stalin Five-Year Plans into the second coal basin of the east of our country." (15 April 1949)

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SUB-

THEMES We must strive even harder for economic development:

"The Soviet people will make the proper response to the solicitude of the party and the Government. They will respond with new successes, Socialist competition, higher labor efficiency, and still greater efforts." (10 April 1949)

"Inspired by the successes of our country in the struggle for completion of the post-war Five-Year Plan in four years, we are warmly hailing the proposal made by the construction mine workers of the Don Basin for the organization of a Socialist competition for preschedule completion of the construction plans of the fourth year of the Five-Year Plan." (15 April 1949)

The USSR is cooperating economically with (or giving economic aid to) the New Democracies:

"In all their great constructive work, the new Peoples' Democracies rely on the general assistance of the USSR, assistance aimed at promoting their consolidation and development to the utmost." (12 April 1949)

Overseas imperialists are harming the economy of Western Europe:

"The eyes of the workers of the Western European countries are being opened to the evil influences of subjecting the national economic interests to the interests of overseas imperialists." (13 May 1949)

VI. STRENGTH

BROAD

THEMES The democratic camp is strong, and growing in strength:

"These great historical landslides are causing uneasy activity in the camp of the instigators of war. Fearing the awakening of the millions, the despicable negligible minority is trying to enforce its will upon the peoples, to turn the cold war into a new world slaughter." (14 April 1949)

"The peace movement has been joined by the countries of Asia and Africa, along with the countries of Europe and North and South America." (14 April 1949)

VII. CULTURE

BROAD

THEMES We are cultured (science, invention, education, art, etc.):

"The long list of Stalin Laureates, says the editorial of TRUD, contains names of scientists known to the whole country and far beyond its frontiers, names of members of the older generation, rich with experience, bearers of the noble traditions of Russian science...." (9 April 1949)

The West is uncultured, decadent:

"Anti-moral and anti-aesthetic qualities of bourgeois art serve the pathological psychology and depraved tastes of the bourgeoisie." (12 April 1949)

VIII. NATIONAL UNITY

Our opponents are dismembering Germany:

"The leading part in this Parliamentary Council, this gathering of the gravediggers of Germany's unity and national independence, is played by the representatives of the reactionary parties: The Christian Democratic Union, the Christian Social Union, and Schumacher's Social Democratic Party. Having undermined the formation of a single all-German Democratic Government, the United States, Great Britain, and France have now decided to complete rapidly Germany's final division and to form the puppet West German Government." (13 April 1949)

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B. OMISSIONS AND EVASIONS

In any propaganda campaign, the omissions or evasions are often of as much interest as the emphasized themes. They frequently suggest possible points of vulnerability in the propagandist's armor--weak spots which he hopes his audience will not think about too much, and which (presumably) he hopes his propaganda-opponents will not bring to their attention.

Some of the neglected topics in Soviet radio broadcasts (in each case a relative rather than an absolute neglect) are as follows:

The control of atomic energy: It may be remembered that in the fall of 1948, during the sessions of the U.N. General Assembly, Vishinsky led off a strenuous propaganda campaign (strongly supported by the Soviet radio) to "prohibit atomic weapons and reduce armaments by one-third." This campaign, however, stands in sharp contrast to the soft-pedalling policy followed by the Soviet radio both before and since. This policy has been to give the topic of world control of atomic energy only the bare minimum of attention which the news of the day seemed to necessitate, and to deal with it then so briefly and evasively that the obstructive role of the Soviet delegation could not become clear in the minds of the ordinary radio listeners. In fact, a similar evasiveness characterized even the short but strenuous campaign to "ban the bomb." The Soviet radio did not at any time discuss the practical problem of how the "banning of the bomb" could be effectively implemented; and the timing of the campaign suggested that it might have been a defensive, attention-distracting device, brought out only when the alternative would have been a focusing of world attention on the obstructive minority role of the USSR. When a dangerous issue cannot be completely avoided, it can at least be confused.

Soviet military strength: For reasons which appear to be somewhat different, the Soviet radio almost never discusses concretely either the strength of the Red Army or the strategy which it might use in case of war. It is sometimes assumed in the West that the Soviet radio uses a "strategy of terror"--a direct attempt to intimidate Western Europe with the frightening picture of a Red military juggernaut crashing across Western Europe against slight opposition. Actually, although references to Soviet military strength do occur, they are much less frequent than is sometimes supposed. There is no such reference, for example, in the sample of Soviet broadcasts on the preceding pages. And, when the might of the Red Army is extolled, care is taken to picture that Army as playing a strictly defensive role. For example, there are fairly frequent references to the almost single-handed victory of the USSR in World War II; here the context is one of heroic defense rather than aggression. It is also occasionally said that if the present-day "instigators of war" succeed in precipitating another world catastrophe, their end will be as ignominious as that of Hitler. Here too, however, the context is one of successful Soviet defense against aggression, and not an invasion of Western Europe. There have been no monitored direct references to the overwhelming superiority of the USSR in standing land strength, and only very occasional indirect hints that the Red Army could, if necessary, invade Western Europe.

A possible reason for this reticence is suggested by the occasional Soviet accusation that the ruling circles in the West are "brandishing" the atom bomb, or "threatening the world" with the bomb. The assumption appears to be that "brandishing" one's own weapons would be almost an open declaration of aggressive intentions. The primary propaganda emphasis of the Soviet radio is, as we have seen, the attempt to picture its enemies as aggressors and the USSR as a wholly peaceloving, non-militaristic nation. Presumably, then, Moscow does not want to lay itself open to the charge of "brandishing" the Red Army.

Communism: The relatively small amount of direct ideological content in present-day Soviet radio propaganda for foreign consumption becomes apparent if Soviet broadcasts are contrasted with, for example, the Communist Manifesto. Most of the traditional vocabulary of socialism and of proletarian revolution is absent. The word "revolution" itself, for instance, appears rarely, and there are few references to the overthrow of capitalism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, the property question, the profit motive, the common ownership of the means of production, the class struggle, class antagonisms, surplus value, dialectical materialism, the materialist interpretation of history, the classless society, the withering away of the state, or the necessity of force as "the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with the new."

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Now, as previously, however, Soviet radio propaganda "never ceases to instil the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism" between the "two great camps" into which the world is assumed to be divided. And, by its references to "Wall Street," "reactionaries," "monopolists," etc., in irreconcilable conflict with "the people" or "the forces of democracy," the Soviet radio makes it clear that these two camps have a class basis. But it is generally implicitly assumed that the middle classes are part of "the people" and that their property and interests are not in any way endangered. It is also assumed that if violence occurs it could only be perpetrated by the "negligible, despicable minority" of Wall Street monopolists, and not by a Communist revolutionary minority bent upon overthrowing the capitalist system as such. The class line which is stressed is the line between "the people" (implicitly including the middle class who want peace as much as the workers do) and a presumably very small "ruling" class, rather than between the petit bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Soviet radio broadcasts (especially those for most foreign audiences) include few references that would remind listeners of either the violent record of the Communist Party or the frankly revolutionary and violence-condoning elements in the orthodox Communist ideology.

Individual freedom: With rare exceptions, the strong Western emphasis on individual freedom is countered by ignoring it, or by counter-charges of "slavery" in the West. (The latter are, however, largely a recent development, apparently as a response to increased Western publicity about slave labor in the USSR. The typical Soviet answer to the charge that the USSR is a police-state has been simply to ignore it.) This evasion of the subject of individual freedom is the primary difference between the values emphasized by the Soviet radio and those in our own ideology. Moscow's broadcasters say that they approve of all the fundamental values cherished by the West: peace, democracy, truthfulness, national independence, economic welfare, etc. On the verbal level, there is a remarkably close parallel between their value-system and ours, even in terms of relative emphasis. There is, however, this one marked difference of emphasis: while the Soviet propagandists implicitly and sometimes explicitly approve of individual freedom (free speech, freedom of religion, etc.), their emphasis on it is only a fraction of ours. They give enormous emphasis to "democracy," but their implicit definition of democracy makes it almost synonymous with "economic justice" and non-discrimination against selected social and economic groups, with only faint connotation of individual freedom. With us, however, individual freedom occupies a primary role in the values constituting a democratic way of life.

Facts: Soviet radio broadcasts preserve a facade of fact-mindedness; like those of the BBC and the Voice of America, they ordinarily take the form of presenting and commenting on current events. But, behind this facade, there is a tissue of unsupported assertions in which hard facts are few and far between. The quotations given above bring out this contrast. For example, the second quotation follows immediately after a statement attributed to the editors of Stockholm's ARBEIDERBLADET, a presumably factual news item. But the broadcast almost immediately arrives at the inevitable conclusion of U.S. aggression, without giving even an alleged fact to support that conclusion:

"The editors of the ARBEIDERBLADET can hardly be unaware of these American calculations. They certainly realize that the United States intends to use Norway as a springboard in its aggression against the Soviet Union."

The prevalence of unsupported assertions is perhaps especially conspicuous on the subject of war and peace. The ruling circles of the United States are said to be aggressive because they are arming, and "knocking together" the aggressive Atlantic Pact. There are here two unquestionable facts--the arms and the Pact--which serve to maintain the Soviet facade of fact-mindedness. But when it comes to the question of why these things prove U.S. aggression, there is a reliance on the only slightly supported assumption that the USSR is "obviously" peace-loving, and to arm for a possible war with a peace-loving nation can--obviously--be nothing but aggressive in purpose.

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